Ethan Brubaker

Cal Cunning Mock Writing Portfolio

This past semester, I have covered the Cal Cunningham campaign for senate in North Carolina. As the Democratic challenger to the incumbent senator Thom Tillis, the Cunningham campaign sought to capitalize on his background in the military and his public service in North Carolina. Looking back on this campaign, I think the foremost lesson that I took away from it would be the importance of preparation and crisis leadership. Given the many unexpected turns of the campaign - including Tillis contracting the coronavirus and Cunningham being embroiled in a sexting scandal, covering this race has made me realize that no race is immune to surprises. As such, not only must communication teams be ready to respond to any controversies that may arise, but they must also be able to mitigate any aftermath so as to instill a comforting sense of normality upon supporters and voters alike.

**Message Box:**

202 North Carolina Senate Race

Calvin “Cal” Cunningham (US) (D) and Thom Tillis (Them) (R)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Us/Us**   * Small town roots from Lexington   + Christian values   + Hard work from family brickyard * Veteran   + Volunteered after the September 11th attacks   + Patriotic and honorable   + Now continuing oath to support and defend the Constitution in government * History of public service   + Worked to improve energy and early childhood education in state senate   + Grew an environmental company   + Vice Chairman of Governor Roy Cooper’s Crime Commission   + Legal work for workers’ rights | **Them/ Them**   * Humble roots   + “a struggle” growing up   + Moved many times   + Lived paycheck to paycheck   + Learned hard work (e.g. being a paperboy)   + Couldn’t afford college and had to get it over the course of 18 years   + Brings humility to Senate * Motivated   + Wants to help those with job insecurity or who are struggling to make ends meet   + Wants to support families   + Reminded of own struggle * Protects Americans and North Carolinians   + Has ensured there is personal protective equipment in classrooms   + Protected American intellectual property and technology from theft by China   + Protected against price gouging for everyday items |
| **Us/ Them**   * Republicans don’t like Tillis   + Alienates Trump supporters by criticizing him   + BUT he goes back on his criticism * Tillis opposes Medicaid expansion   + Bad given the coronavirus   + Bragged about blocking it   + Doesn’t care about constituents * Bad for education   + As Speaker of the NC House, eliminated funds for public schools and increased class sizes * Tillis would be bad for NC businesses   + He was on vacation after COVID relief negotiations failed * Tillis is not a good leader   + Hypocritical about not wearing a mask despite advocating for it   + “Too weak” to speak out about changes to USPS laws   + “Failure to stand up to his corporate donors” | **Them/Us**   * Would be part of Democratic establishment   + Cunningham is akin to Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY)   + Would allow for progressive measures to get passed   + Cunningham wants to change the filibuster rule for legislation * Cunningham would weaken law enforcement   + Prevent them from doing their job   + not “fighting for our brave men and women in blue”   + Joined protesters to “abolish the police” * Cunningham is bad for NC businesses   + Cunningham has attacked the Paycheck Protection Program |

**Sources:**

<https://morningconsult.com/2020/08/24/majority-makers-north-carolina-senate-cunningham-tillis/>

<https://www.calfornc.com/meet-cal/>

<https://www.thomtillis.com/thoms-record/>

<https://twitter.com/thomtillis?lang=en>

**Media Advisory:**

MEDIA ADVISORY Contact: Ethan Brubaker

September 10, 2020 Phone: 717-555-9832

NC Senate Candidate Cal Cunningham to Host a Voter Registration Night with Wilkesboro Native Zach Galifianakis

Rally represents Cal’s dedication to fighting for and celebrating North Carolinians

GREENVILLE, NC – North Carolina Senate Candidate Cal Cunningham and Wilkesboro native Zach Galifianakis are inviting North Carolinians to join them at the Greenville Toyota Amphitheater on September 13 at 7:00 p.m. for a socially distanced voter registration event leading up to general election. This rally will educate voters about the in-person and mail-in voting processes while energizing voters to help enact the change Washington needs.

Cunningham is looking forward to hearing from voters about the issues facing them – particular those regarding the coronavirus and access to voting. As a former businessman, he understands the extent by which the coronavirus has impacted North Carolinian businesses and workers, and he is ready to bring that knowledge and accountability to Washington this November.

WHO: Senate Candidate Cal Cunningham

Comedian Zach Galifianakis

WHAT: Voter registration event for North Carolinians

WHERE: Greenville Toyota Amphitheater

05 E 1st St

Greenville, NC

27858

WHEN: Sunday, September 13 at 7:00 p.m.

WHY: Cunningham wants to educate and energize North Carolinian voters

###

**Talking Points:**

Talking Points: Cal Cunningham

Spoken by the Candidate

Event: Voter Registration Night with Native Zach Galifianakis

* My name is Cal Cunningham, and I am the Democratic candidate for Senate. Growing up in Lexington, I learned the value of honesty and hard work through my church, Scouting, and working at my family’s brickyard.
* I was elected as one of North Carolina’s youngest State Senators at 27 following my graduation of UNC Chapel Hill. In the state senate, I fought for smaller class sizes, higher teacher pay, and investments in early childhood education. I was an advocate for landmark clean air legislation, land preservation, and campaign finance reform.
* Following the September 11th attacks, I volunteered to join the U.S. Army Reserve in the Airborne Corps and First Special Forces Command. I served three active duty tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, earning the Bronze Star and General Douglas MacArthur Leadership Award.
* I have served North Carolina communities as well by helping to grow an environmental company, fighting for North Carolina workers in the courtroom, and being named the Vice Chairman of the Governor Roy Cooper’s Crime Commission.
* I will fight for all North Carolinian workers, especially farmers and agricultural workers who have been impacted negatively by tariffs and Trump administrations trade policy. I have been endorsed by numerous labor organizations, including the NC State AFL-CIO, Communications Workers of America Local 3611, and the Professional Fire Fighters and Paramedics of North Carolina.
* The coronavirus not just a public health crisis, but a national security issue. We must listen to the scientists and public health experts so that we can tackle the issue in a safe manner.
* With this election being impacted by the coronavirus, it is important to protect and expand voting rights. This means ensuring that the postal service is funded and that everyone has the resources available to vote by mail or safely in person.
* We must address the gaps in our health care system by lowering cost while making health care more accessible. I will strengthen and extend coverage of the Affordable Care Act while creating a public health insurance option.
* I will continue the education work I started in the North Carolina state senate by fighting for a national strategy to invest in public schools. Specifically, I would work to support our teachers with increased funding while also working to expand educational support to rural and underfunded schools.
* I wish to continue this oath I took when I joined the Army Reserve to support and defend the Constitution of the United States by being your next Senator.

**Press Release:**

For Immediate Release Contact: Ethan Brubaker

September 14, 2020 Phone: 612-555-1212

**NC Senate Candidate Cal Cunningham Hosted a Voter Registration Night with Wilkesboro Native Zach Galifianakis**

GREENVILLE, NC – North Carolina Senate Candidate Cal Cunningham and Wilkesboro native comedian Zach Galifianakis joined over 75 North Carolinians at the Greenville Toyota Amphitheater tonight for a socially distanced voter registration event. The night was filled with laughs courtesy of Galifianakis, as well as an insightful discussion led by Cunningham. Cunningham discussed both in-person and mail-in voting while highlighting to voters some of the reform measures he would institute in the Senate. “I always love events like these,” exclaimed Cunningham after the event. “Being able to meet with North Carolinians and discuss with them the issues facing our communities in an important part of democracy and of a healthy government.”

Galifianakis opened the event by speaking with the crowd about his North Carolina roots and how the character of the people around him inspired him to pursue his career in entertainment. Infusing optimism into the great uncertainty of these times, Galifianakis celebrated the “humor and insight that led [him] to a career where the success of the individual is measured by the happiness they instill into others.” Cunningham echoed this sentiment by discussing the impact that his time in the Lexington Boy Scout Troop had on his desire to enter public service.

Of the questions asked that night by voters, most were regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the economy. Drawing from his own experience at the environmental services company WasteZero, Cunningham praised the vital role that business play in local communities. “We must not only protect these businesses, but the people they employed,” Cunningham stated. “Too many communities across North Carolina have seen the effects of growing economic inequality. We must understand that the only way to rebuild this economy is by recognizing the hard work of North Carolinians all across the state.”

Nate Wilson, one of the attendees, shared the excitement that he felt following the event, “This is the first I met any politician ever, and I was surprised by how much time he took to answer my question. It definitely makes me feel a little better about the state of politics now.”

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Exclusive given to *The News & Observer* reporter Jim Morrill for his tireless local political coverage.

**Calendar:**

Cal Cunningham (D) Campaign Calendar Week of October 25 – November 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **25 Sunday**  Visit to Hico Baptist Church in Alamance County   * Press release   Radio call-in to WPTF   * Share excerpts on social media   Joint virtual rally with Theresa Greenfield   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Start of Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts   * Share on social media   -------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * NC College Dems Meeting * Final Count-down Ad * Zoom call for *Jimmy Fallon* | **26 Monday**  Morning interview with FOX 26 – social media  Zoom Meeting with NC College Democrats   * Share excerpts on social media   Release *Final Countdown Ad*   * Press release   Zoom call for *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* as a guest   * Share excerpts on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  -------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * Q&A with NC rural farmers * “One Week Out” Zoom call | **27 Tuesday**  Morning interview with CBS 3   * Share excerpts on social media   Q&A session with NC rural farmers   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   “One Week Out” Zoom call with volunteers   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad*  -------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * Zoom session with NC State AFL-CIO * “A Salute to First Respon-ders event” | **28 Wednesday**  Interview with *Charlotte Post* Editorial Team – to be released that afternoon   * Share excerpts on social media   Zoom Q&A session with NC State AFL-CIO about the economy   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   “A Salute to First Responders” event with The Professional Fire Fighters and Paramedics of North Carolina   * Share excerpts on social media   Evening Interview with ABC 45   * Share excerpts on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad*  -------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * NC Style BBQ with VoteVets * Virtual Rally with NARAL * Virtual Q&A with NC Association of Educators | **29 Thursday**  NC Style BBQ event with VoteVets in Ashville   * Share excerpts on social media * Press release   Virtual Rally For Women’s Rights with NARAL   * Share excerpts on social media * Press release   Virtual Q&A with NC Association of Educators and discussion the challenges of educating remotely   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media     Instagram Live Q&A   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media     Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad*  --------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * Zoom Washing-ton round-table * ACLU Member call * *The Daily Show* appear- ance | **30 Friday**  Interview With WNCTimes   * Published that day * Share excerpts on social media   Zoom Washington Reform Roundtable with End Citizens United   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Immigration Injustices and the American Dream zoom call with ACLU members   * Share excerpts on social media   Zoom call for *The Daily Show*   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad*  -------------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * NC Style BBQ with VoteVets * Reddit AMA * Trick-or-Treating | **31 Saturday**  NC Style BBQ event with VoteVets in Hickory  Interview with Ch. 7 – NBC   * Share excerpts on social media   Reddit AMA   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Cal Hands out Trick-or-Treat and safe voting information cards   * Press release * Share on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad*  ----------------------  **Send Press Advisories for**   * Visiting Jubilee Church * Kickoff Rally * Face-   book Q&A   * GOTV rally with Julianne   Moore | **01 Sunday**  Visit Jubilee Community Church in Asheville   * Press release   Socially Distanced Kickoff Rally   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Facebook Q&A   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Virtual GOTV rally and Q&A with NC Native Julianne Moore   * Press release * Share excerpts on social media   Continue Digital Ad Blitz and Email blasts  *Final Countdown Ad* |

**News Story:**

**Tillis, Cunningham in Tight Race Less Than Two Weeks Before Election**

**Raleigh, NC –** With eleven days until the election, North Carolinian houses have become decked out with yard signs for either the incumbent Republican Senator Thom Tillis or his Democratic challenger Cal Cunningham. As one of the most closely follow campaigns, North Carolina is crucial for Democrats’ goal of winning back control of the Senate.

Cunningham, whose campaign has become embroiled in controversy after he admitted to having an extramarital affair, currently leads Tillis by 2 points in a new [Washington Post -ABC News poll](https://www.washingtonpost.com/context/oct-12-17-2020-post-abc-poll-north-carolina/5bed58ac-8dc1-4018-857b-ab7aedeb3d2e/?tid=a_inl_manual). Even though scandals and promiscuity are nothing new for voters in North Carolina (see the John Edwards scandal in 2008), the subsequent Army Reserve investigation into Cunningham – who is a U.S. Army Reserve Lieutenant Colonel – has continued to prolong conversations on the matter.

In response to Cunningham’s affair, he and his team release [a video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0eJMveABMY4) highlighting the Army Reserve investigation, saying that “veterans know they can’t trust Cal Cunningham.” Having [tested positive](https://www.newsobserver.com/news/politics-government/election/article246240125.html) during the same week that the scandal broke, Tillis’ rebound since then has highlighted his commitment to defending his senate seat. Whether similar messaging from the Republican party will work in moving voters away from Cunningham is still unknown, but time is running out for any other October Surprise.

Another influential factor in this heated race was revealed at the end of the third financial quarter, when Cunningham [raised $28.3 million](https://www.calfornc.com/news/breaking-cal-cunningham-raises-28-3-million-in-record-breaking-q3-haul/) in the three-month period – more than any other Senate candidate ever in North Carolina. According to the campaign, 96% of those donations were under $100 and over 400,000 North Carolinians donated in the third quarter alone.

“These record-breaking numbers are a testament to the faith that North Carolinians have in Cal’s ability to lead,” says Shannon Rice, a political consultant working with the Cunningham campaign. “Democrats, Republicans, and independents alike are realizing that Senator Tillis has been taking their support for granted the last six years.” It is the goal of Cunningham and his campaign to highlight Tillis record on issues such as healthcare and COVID-19 relief.

Though the full role that these events are playing in the election will only be revealed after November 3rd, it is certain that this is one of most-staked Senate races to watch. So far, more than [1.98 North Carolinians have voted](https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/politics-government/election/article246581003.html), with the majority being women, black, or registered Democrats. With the clock ticking, it is clear that both campaigns are working tirelessly to influence both early voters and those planning to vote on Election Day.

**Op-Ed:**

Cal Cunningham Op – ed for the Charlotte Post

An Election Bigger Than All of Us

As your Democratic Senate nominee, I am grateful to the people of North Carolina for providing my family and I with privacy these last few days as we work our way through a trying time. I have hurt them immensely and disappointed my supporters, and for that I am truly and deeply sorry. I take responsibility for my actions on and off of the campaign trail. I am dedicated to working to earn back the trust of those I have taken for granted. Just as I have turned to my family and loved ones to help me repent and become a better man, so I have turned to God to ask for his forgiveness.

I am committed to mending the relationships with those closest to me, I am ready to fight for North Carolinians as I have been since the early days of this campaign, since I first began serving the people as a member of the state house. I have been reminded that the election this year is not solely about Republican or Democratic issues. Rather, it is about issues that tough the lives of every American, regardless of party. Women’s rights, education, and the future of our economy are all on the ballot.

This race is still about ensuring that North Carolinians’ healthcare is ensured and protected during this time of great uncertainty. I am going to continue in my effort to make the best case that I can go to Washington with the goal to improve the state of our current healthcare system. Unlike what the President has emulated, we might continue to work hard – just as we have – to limit the spread of Coronavirus. To all of you who are wearing masks, socially distancing, and limiting your contact with others – I see you and I am immensely grateful for the sacrifices you are making.

It is no secret that our healthcare system is inadequate. Senate Republicans are pushing through a dangerous lawsuit to dismantle the Affordable Care Act and put in jeopardy the health care of North Carolinians all across the state. Doing so would not only threaten countless lives, but families shouldn’t be worried about their ability to pay the medical bills for themselves or loved ones. Republicans such as Senator Thom Tillis seek to pass legislation that limits protections for the 1.7 million North Carolinians living with pre-existing conditions. This election must be a referendum on such disregard for the lives of North Carolinians. Washington needs to be held accountable for its stifling of American progress.

The election this year is unlike any we have experienced before – that alone is more than evident. We have to tell Washington that enough is enough: we need change and we need it now. The best way to embrace this message is by voting this fall. Whether you are mailing-in your ballot or going to the polls on November 3rd, each of our voices matter, and I encourage all of you to vote. We owe it to ourselves and those closest to us to exercise this constitutional right to usher in a government by the people and for the people.

*Cal Cunningham is a lawyer and member of the United States Army Reserve; he is running as the Democratic candidate for the North Carolina Senate Seat this election.*

**Speech:**

**Cal Cunningham – Final Speech for 11/02/2020**

Good evening everyone, and god bless the great state of North Carolina! My name is Cal Cunningham, and I am running as your Democratic candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Growing up in the small town of Lexington, I never imagined that I would be standing in front all of you today on the cusp of once of the most important election years of our lifetime. Starting with the scoutmasters and church leaders who I looked up to in my youth, I was introduced not just to the importance of strong leadership, but to the notion of service upon self for your fellow man.

After graduating from UNC and witnesses the horrific attacks on September 11,2001 I was inspired by these childhood mentors to enlist in the U.S. Army Reserve, and I have since been fortunate to serve three active duty tours, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. It was there that I took an oath to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

And I stand before you today in pursuance of this goal. Recently, as Vice Chairman of Governor Roy Cooper’s Crime Commission, I fought to protect our schools from gun violence, our neighborhoods from the threat of opioids, and wives and husbands facing domestic violence. It is my passion for public service that has brought me to this stage today.

Throughout the course of this campaign, I have been fortunate enough to travel across this state. From this experience, I have gained a newfound admiration – a newfound love – for North Carolinas and North Carolina. We is not a red state, and we are not blue state. From Cherokee to Pamlico, North Carolinians are hard-working, loyal, and - most importantly – diverse.

Thom Tillis has seemed to have forgotten that this aspect of North Carolinians. He has repeatedly sided with Trump and McConnell’s cronies – following their guise even when it has threatened the livelihoods and businesses of this state. Thom Tillis has allowed corporate donors and special interests to take him – and North Carolinians – for granted. It is time to send him and others on a Capitol Hill that we will not let this stand.

Washington is broken and doesn’t need another yes-man. Regardless of who is in the white house, regardless who is leading the Senate, I make a promise to all of you today to answer only to all of you here today.

This is a time of great uncertainty – that alone is self-evident. Yet, I look to the future with an optimism. Not an optimism contingent upon ignorance or of turning away from the problem. Rather, I am hopeful because of the tenacity and hard of North Carolinians and all citizens imbued with the American spirit.

As we know, tomorrow is a great day all across this nation. A day where we work to not only preserve this great democracy, but to hold those in office in check. There is a nobility that must be returned to the public sector. I am asking for vote not because I am a Democrat and not because my opponent is a Republican. Party politics has divided this nation too much already. I am asking for your vote today to send a Washington that we will not be taken for granted anymore. I am here to serve you as we enter this new age in America, and I ask that you provide me with that opportunity.

Thank you.